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ABSTRACT

The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) was established under the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 to work with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) to forge a national consensus with respect to a long-term agenda for educational research, development, dissemination, and the activities of OERI. The NERPPB has 15 members appointed by the Secretary of Education for 6-year terms. One-third of the members are researchers in education, one-third are school-based professional educators, and the remainder are individuals knowledgeable about education in the United States. The NERPPB, which is not independent of OERI, has responsibilities in the areas of setting priorities, approving standards, conducting review functions, providing liaison with the field and the public, and improving the system. Some of the major accomplishments of the NERPPB are reviewed in the areas of program priorities, peer review and standards, and research, development, and dissemination. These accomplishments have resulted in a variety of reports on standards and particular aspects of educational research. The NERPPB has performed as required as it has developed its operating style and worked on the approval of standards and collaboration and approval of research priority plans. (SLD)

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NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH
POLICY & PRIORITIES BOARD

The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board: Its Role, Development, and Prospects

National Educational Research Policy
and Priorities Board
U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education
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Secretary

National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board
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Chair

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January 1999

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National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board

The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) is authorized by the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994. The Board was established to work collaboratively with the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) to forge a national consensus with respect to a long-term agenda for educational research, development, dissemination, and the activities of the Office. The Board regularly reviews, evaluates, and publicly comments upon the implementation of its policies by the U.S. Department of Education and the Congress.

The Board has compiled this document to inform the public about its activities and accomplishments since its establishment in 1994 and to sketch out its prospective role for the future.

Members of the Board are appointed by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education by virtue of their training, experience, and background in educational research and the education professions.

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The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board: Its Role, Development, and Prospects

The National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (NERPPB) plays a critical role in federal education research. Many of the Board's responsibilities are carried out in collaboration with the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. The Board attempts to make this relationship a constructive one that advances education research and strengthens its use by teachers and administrators in local schools. This document describes the role and work of the Board. It discusses:

* the **Purpose** of the Board,
* the **Role** of the Board,
* the Board's **Accomplishments** to date, and
* **Prospects** for the future.

Purpose

Most federal agencies have groups of external consultants constituted in various ways to provide advice, help develop policy, or, in some respects, to govern. Since establishment of the National Institute of Education (NIE) in 1972, the education research agencies of the U.S. Department of Education and its predecessor, the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), have had such a body.

An influential study, *Research and Education Reform: Roles for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement,* published in 1992 by the National Research Council (NRC) Committee on the Federal Role in Education Research made three recommendations that influenced Congress in creating the NERPPB. First, it proposed a 24-member policymaking board—one-third of whose members would be distinguished researchers, and two-

thirds practitioners, parents, employers, policymakers, and "others who have made noteworthy contributions to excellence in education." The members would be appointed by the President for 6-year terms, the President would seek advice on appointments from professional organizations, and the chair would be elected by the board members. The Committee's report argued that a board was needed that was different from the type previously had by NIE and OERI. It sought focus and stability.

Contrasting the advantages of their proposal over a purely advisory group, the Committee said that "persons of accomplishment are more likely to agree to serve on a (policymaking) board and . . . a policymaking board is likely to be more influential." The board would differ from others by its size (24 members), diversity, and limitation to "people who have already proven their ability to make important contributions to research on education or to excellence in education. . . ." The board would monitor the health, needs, and accomplishments of OERI's research and development (R&D) work and "all federally sponsored education R&D"; report periodically to the President and Congress about both; and guide the agency's agenda-setting.

The second NRC Committee recommendation was that the board should establish a process to develop priorities for OERI's agenda that involve active participation of various groups concerned with education. It would not set OERI's agenda on the basis of its members' views, but "would distill priorities from the needs and capabilities of the country after wide consultation with those concerned about education. The priority-setting process will be messy and at times confusing, but only through such a process can there be an agenda that truly reflects the country's needs." The Committee proposed 5-, 10-, and 15-year national research plans, such as those used at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The agenda-setting process also was to "reflect the capabilities of the education R&D enterprise."

Third, the NRC Committee's version of an education research board would publish a biennial report on federally funded education R&D—its accomplishments, program activities and funding levels throughout the government, unmet needs—and make recommendations for future

directions. The emphasis in the biennial report would be on synthesizing "what has been learned from education research, how it has extended prior knowledge, implications for practice and school reform, the development and assistance activities . . ." across all federal involvement in education research.

The NRC Committee did not want to raise expectations beyond credibility. While it claimed that the board is "modeled closely on the National Science Board," it also noted that "there are no assurances that the same structure will work effectively for OERI. . . . OERI's board would be making decisions related to education, a topic with which almost everyone has prolonged experience and strong opinions . . . . Its success is not guaranteed, but the alternatives are less promising."

The Educational Research, Development, Dissemination, and Improvement Act of 1994

The 1994 legislation reauthorizing the Office of Educational Research and Improvement created the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board. It has 15 public members (rather than the 24 proposed by the NRC Committee) appointed by the Secretary (rather than the President), terms are for 6 years, and the Board selects its own chair. One-third of the members are researchers in education "nominated by the National Academy of Sciences," one-third are "outstanding school-based professional educators," and the final third are "individuals . . . knowledgeable about the education needs of the United States." All are to be "by virtue of their training, experience, and background in education research and the education professions, . . . exceptionally qualified to appraise the educational research and development effort of the United States."

In addition to the requirement that research members be nominated by the National Academy of Sciences, the Secretary is required to solicit nominations from specific interest groups such as the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers, National Parent-Teachers Association, American Library Association, American Association of School Administrators, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Indian School Board Association, Association of Community Tribal Schools, and the National Indian Education Association.

The 1994 law also designated eight non-voting ex-officio members from the U.S. Departments of Defense and of Labor, National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, the Office of Indian Education Programs of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Librarian of Congress.

The Board is given numerous responsibilities in education research planning, particularly in reaching out to stakeholder groups. The NRC Committee's concept of a "biennial report" is assigned to the Assistant Secretary, rather than to the Board, although the Board may provide its own "comments and recommendations" on the report. The Committee's emphasis on education research across the government, rather than narrowly limited to OERI, is preserved throughout the 1994 law. The Board's specific functions are detailed in the next section.

The legislation closely follows recommendations of the NRC Committee in the creation of the Board. Among other things, the Board is to connect the interests of educators and policymakers with those of researchers. Its perspective is to be government-wide.

Role

As described in law, the role of the Board is closely intertwined with that of the Assistant Secretary for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement. It is, by intent, not independent, separately conducting its own policy-setting activities in the manner that the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) does for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). It has policy responsibilities—for example, approval power for priorities and standards—in addition to advisory ones, but collaborating with the Assistant Secretary and reaching out to stakeholders are specified modes of operation. The Board selects its Executive Director, but any other staff assigned to the Board are provided at the discretion of the Assistant Secretary. The responsibilities set out in law can be grouped into setting priorities, approving standards, conducting review functions, providing liaison with the field and the public, and improving the system.

Program priorities functions include:

* Working collaboratively with the Assistant Secretary to determine priorities that guide the work of the Office.

* Reviewing and approving the research priorities plan developed by the Assistant Secretary in collaboration with the Board. (Note: This is reciprocal in the law. Language mandating the research priorities plan requires that the Assistant Secretary collaborate with the Board in its preparation and must submit it to the Board for "review and approval.")

* Recommending missions for the national research centers by identifying topics that require long-term, sustained, systematic, programmatic, and integrated research and dissemination efforts.

Standards setting functions include:

* Reviewing and approving standards for the conduct and evaluation of all research, development, and dissemination carried out under the auspices of OERI. (Note: The Assistant Secretary is mandated to develop standards "in consultation with the Board" and must submit them to the Board for "review and approval." The law specifies three types of standards: those for reviewing grant applications and cooperative agreements; those for evaluating performance under OERI funds; and those for designating exemplary and promising programs.)

Review and evaluation functions include:

* Reviewing, evaluating, and publicly commenting upon the implementation of Board recommended priorities and policies by the Department and the Congress.

* Reviewing and commenting on proposed contracts, grants, and cooperative agreement proposals exceeding $500,000 in any single fiscal year or an aggregate of $1 million. (Note: This is a strong provision. The Assistant Secretary "may not solicit any contract bid or issue a request for proposals or

applications for any grant or cooperative agreement" exceeding $500,000 in a single year or $1 million in total unless the Board has had an opportunity to provide written comments on consistency with the Research Priorities Plan and soundness and adequacy of the methodology.)

* Providing guidance to Congress on its oversight of OERI.

Liaison functions include:

* Advising the United States on the federal educational research and development effort.
* Recommending ways to strengthen active partnerships among researchers, educational practitioners, librarians, and policymakers.
* Soliciting advice and information from the educational field to define research needs and suggestions for research topics.
* Involving educational practitioners, particularly teachers, in identifying research topics.

Finally, the following functions describe a Board role to strengthen the education R&D system:

* Advise the Assistant Secretary on activities to improve the coordination of educational research, development, and dissemination within the Department and the federal government. (Note: Again, the Assistant Secretary's mandate is reciprocal. The mandate for coordination of education research within the Department and across the government shall be done "with the advice and assistance of the Board.")
* Make recommendations to the Assistant Secretary of persons qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of research institute directors (after making special efforts to identify qualified women and minorities and soliciting and giving due consideration to recommendations from professional associations and interested members of the public).

- Advise and make recommendations to the President with respect to individuals who are qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of the Assistant Secretary.

- Recommend ways to strengthen interaction and collaboration between the various program offices and components.

- Recommend ways to translate research findings into workable, adaptable models for use in policy and in practice across different settings.

- Recommend incentives to draw talented young people into the field of educational research, including scholars from disadvantaged and minority groups.

Several themes are clearly and repeatedly set out in these responsibilities. The Board is a policy group, given explicit responsibilities for approving research priorities, approving standards, and commenting on proposed funding awards exceeding $1 million. The Board performs these functions in collaboration with the Assistant Secretary, and the Assistant Secretary is required to collaborate with the Board. The Assistant Secretary, for example, prepares the research priorities plan, but the Board collaborates and must approve the plan as well. (As noted below, the Board is undertaking several activities so it can be a contributing partner in this work.)

Another theme is the Board's role in communicating, linking, soliciting views, forging consensus, and building partnerships. These emphases can be traced directly to the 1992 NRC Committee report, and they reflect the 1994 congressional emphasis on the Board's role as a bridge builder between researchers and educators, one that could function across changes in administration and through changes in particular policy emphases for education.

A third theme is education research standard setting, or quality. The Board was given a formal approval role in this area that congressional sponsors viewed as critical for credibility of education research. The eight ex-officio members, and the many statutory references to work of other federal agencies, emphasize the breadth of focus sought by the law's sponsors. This wide span also is

apparent in the "advising the United States" provision and the "coordination" activities assigned to the Board that are intended to improve the functioning of the "system" for conduct of education research and development. The Board's activities to implement these functions are described in the sections that follow.

Accomplishments

The Board's work can be defined by two periods. The first, from the initial meeting in March 1995 until the fall of 1996, covered a time when the Board faced a continuing series of demands that threatened the basic ability of OERI to continue its role in funding research and development. The second period, the years following 1996, is one in which the Board identified from its array of specific statutory responsibilities those major elements that are most crucial, then organized itself to fulfill those roles. It is now moving toward critical decision points resulting from its work.

The initial committee structure was designed to accommodate urgent funding cycles that focused the Board's attention during 1995 and 1996. A Board committee was formed to review the Department's proposed solicitation for research and development centers. The committee on standards was obliged to approve peer review standards that had to be in place before research centers could be funded. The regional educational laboratories also were up for a new cycle of funding, and a committee was established to review the solicitation for that.

During this period, Board members began to make an investment in their own learning about OERI's context. That investment continues. They have been briefed on OERI and other Department programs. They have visited WestEd in San Francisco and the National Center for Early Development and Learning at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. They have met with an array of individuals whose experience and insights have an important bearing on the duties of the Board. Andrew Porter, director of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research; Arthur Wise, president of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education; and Patricia Graham, president of the Spencer Foundation, participated in a workshop at the Board's second meeting.

Members met with a panel of San Francisco Bay Area superintendents, and many other distinguished individuals and panels have participated in Board meetings and working groups since that occasion.

Also over the first year and a half, solicitations for research and development centers and for regional educational laboratories were approved, standards for review of grant and cooperative agreement proposals were approved, and the first Research Priorities Plan (published in December 1996) was developed with considerable Board involvement and likewise approved. During this time, the Board also conducted an extensive and public search for its Executive Director. Eve M. Bither assumed the position in June 1996.

Through the fall of 1996 and winter of 1997, Board members set aside time to think through their own views about the diverse responsibilities given to them in the law, their perceptions about their work over the first year and a half of their existence, and their preferences about how the Board's work should be conducted and the committee structures that would help them organize to carry out their role. In March 1997, the Board adopted a workplan and committee structure to focus its activities. Committees were built around the important, enduring work of the Board in four areas: program, peer review and standards, the research and development system, and executive operations. These committees now serve to organize and direct the work of the Board.

Program Priorities

The Board has viewed the December 1996 Research Priorities Plan, *Building Knowledge for a Nation of Learners*, as a statement of concerns, one that includes all of the program areas currently funded by OERI. The purpose of its continuing efforts on program priorities now is to narrow the focus of attention to those issues that historically have been identified as most difficult and intractable in the education of the nation's children. There are several strands to these efforts currently under way.

First, the Board made use of the Research Priorities Plan, together with its own judgment, in its successful argument for concentrating on a few important areas with additional funds appropriated for fiscal year 1997, rather

than spreading those funds across all areas. In the fall of 1996, Congress provided an unexpected $16 million add-on to the OERI appropriation. This came just after the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future made its recommendations for building teaching as a profession and greatly enhancing the capabilities of that profession so that children will learn more effectively. The Board called on the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and the Assistant Secretary for OERI not to spread these appropriations across all of the OERI activities. Instead, they proposed allocations of the funds in a way that emphasized improvement of teaching, field-initiated research, and improved student learning in middle and high schools.

Second, the Board participated in discussions surrounding the voluntary national tests, in part in response to an inquiry from a member of Congress in an appropriation hearing. The views of various Board members about the voluntary tests spanned a spectrum. This difficult issue was handled—with the assistance of the Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing—by developing a description of topics for a research agenda on national tests. The list, along with a letter, was sent to the President in July 1997 and urged research on the impact of the voluntary national tests on classroom practice, state standards, curriculum guides, and assessment systems.

Third, the Board has identified high achievement for all students as its overriding goal and has defined three possible approaches to pursue that end:

* identify factors that facilitate or that frustrate achievement gaps among social divisions (e.g., ethnicity, gender, language, social class);
* strengthen the professional competence of teachers; and
* improve knowledge and technology for assessments that can more accurately interpret achievement and better design effective interventions.

Fourth, to deepen their grasp on these issues, the Board has contracted with the National Academy of Education (NAE) to determine whether the three approaches listed above or others are the most appropriate areas for investigation and to define research questions that can direct the education research agenda. NAE will prepare a report to the Board that includes:

* priorities for education research that can contribute to ensuring high achievement for all students;
* research questions related to each priority;
* sequences of activities and resources needed, including technologies, to achieve the various research priority goals; and
* funding recommendations to accomplish these goals.

NAE has created three panels to carry out this investigation:

* critical transitions and the curricula and assessment practices that support them;
* professional development and teacher communities, including teacher roles in development of curriculum and assessment practices, and assessment of teaching quality; and
* strengthening the capacity for research that can contribute to educational practice and public policy.

NAE has asked each panel to distinguish

* areas where research findings could support productive work in applied research, policy, and innovative practice;
* areas where there is a strong potential for advances of importance to education policy and practice; and
* topics that would require development of capacities that are now lacking.

The principal investigators for this contract with NAE are Ann L. Brown, University of California-Berkeley, and James G. Greeno, Stanford University. The panels are chaired by Hugh Mehan, Department of Sociology, University of California-San Diego (*transitions*);

Magdalene Lampert, School of Education, University of Michigan (*professional development*), and Lauren Resnick, Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh (*research capacity*). Three panel reports will be sent to the Board, and a final synthesis report is due to the Board in spring of 1999.

Fifth, in March 1998, the Board conducted a one-day workshop entitled "Creating a New Research Agenda on the Race, Gender, and Class Impacts on Educational Achievement and Underachievement." This event brought together nationally known experts on these issues (John Stanfield, University of California-Davis, facilitator; Frank Bonilla, City University of New York; Eugene Cota-Robles, The College Board; Evelyn Hu DeHart, University of Colorado at Boulder; Vivian Gadsden, National Center on Fathers and Families; Antoine Garibaldi, Howard University; Edmund T. Gordon, University of Texas at Austin; Robert Hill, Morgan State University; Scott Miller, The College Board; Jessica Nembhard, Morgan State University; Charlene Rivera, George Washington University; and William Trent, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana).

The workshop examined issues of how race, gender, and class should be conceptualized in education research; identified educational research questions and an overall research agenda; considered theoretical and methodological criteria that should guide educational research; and examined ways that research can incorporate analyses to examine isolated and interactive effects of race, gender, and class.

The results of all these Board activities will be available for synthesis in 1999.

Peer Review and Standards

The Board has continued its work on quality standards for OERI. Standards have recently been approved for exemplary and promising practices (adding to the peer review standards adopted in 1995). Current activities on standards include:

* approval of standards for evaluating the quality of OERI-supported projects, and

* publication of a brochure to announce all three sets of standards and to provide information about their importance and contents to a wide public audience.

The Board commissioned an evaluation of the implementation of the OERI peer review standards as they were applied to the 1996 and 1997 national research center and field-initiated studies competitions. The intent was to assist OERI and the Board in considering whether to make changes in the standards or their application. Specifically, the study was charged to examine:

* whether the standards are appropriate and useful,
* whether they contribute to fair and high quality competitions, and
* how the competitions have operated and might be improved. The study will conclude with recommendations on how to configure and maintain peer review panels.

The study, conducted by researcher Diane August, was guided by a panel consisting of Christopher T. Cross, Council for Basic Education; Carl Kaestle, Brown University; Sharon Lewis, Council of Great City Schools; Penelope Peterson, Northwestern University; and Judith Sunley, National Science Foundation. The final report was received in October 1998.

Again, the Board will be in a position to make new contributions to OERI's work as a result of these efforts. Two issues in this area of long standing, both of them coming repeatedly from the experience of agencies such as the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health in peer review procedures, have not yet been addressed by the Board. The first of these concerns the establishment of continuing or standing review panels. These would permit individuals to develop expertise in some cognizant area, and not only approve proposals but evaluate results, then make adjustments in subsequent rounds of grants competitions. The Department and OERI have discouraged this approach in favor of ad hoc panels for individual competitions. The idea continues to come forward when comparisons are made between OERI and other agencies. The second issue is the involvement of OERI staff in the peer review process. OERI

regulations set out a very narrow set of responsibilities for staff, as compared with NSF, for example, where staff have key roles on aspects of grant decisions involving social utility versus scientific merit of proposals. Lacking such roles makes it more difficult to attract and hold competent OERI staff, individuals who are, and are viewed as, peers to researchers in academia.

Research, Development, and Dissemination (RD&D) System

Many responsibilities assigned to the Board nurture the system for conducting research, development, and dissemination in education. For that reason, and recognizing that the responsibilities in this area would be continuing, the Board established a separate committee to direct its work. Several activities are under way, all relating to an initial report that was completed in the fall of 1998:

- Workshops have been held to present and discuss many aspects of the research and development system with the Board. Members have heard from Carl Kaestle, Brown University; Carol Johnson, Superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools; Jane Hannaway, Urban Institute; Robert Slavin, Johns Hopkins University; Karen Seashore Lewis, University of Minnesota; Michael Timpane, formerly Teachers College, Columbia, and now RAND Corporation; Tom Glennan, RAND; Larry Rudner, ERIC Clearinghouse on Assessment and Evaluation; Dena Stoner, Council for Educational Development and Research; Maris Vinovskis, University of Michigan; William Raub, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science Policy, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; John Hollifield, Center for Social Organization of Schools; and Willis Hawley, College of Education, University of Maryland.

- At the Board's request, Maris Vinovskis, University of Michigan, has written a history of the education research and related activities of the U.S. Department of Education and its predecessors. Titled *Changing Federal Strategies for Supporting Educational Research, Development, and Statistics*, the Vinovskis paper covers a span from 1867 to the

present, with emphasis on years since the establishment of the National Institute of Education in 1972. The paper, which concludes with recommendations, has been widely circulated and is accessible at the Board's Web site: ***http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/NERPPB/***

* The Board has commissioned papers from American Institutes for Research/Mathtech on four aspects of the research, development, and dissemination (RD&D) system: (1) a descriptive and analytic mapping of the existing system, not limited to OERI; (2) the fit of the existing system capabilities in relation to the needs for education RD&D work identified by key stakeholders; (3) a comparative analysis with RD&D in other parts of the federal government; and (4) an analysis of the Department's role in knowledge building and information gathering. A synthesis paper in draft format came to the Board for review at the September 1998 meeting. This will provide candid assessments of the functioning of the current system, and realistic responses to the affects of stringent funding on the work of OERI's institutes. The intent of the Board is to begin laying out priorities for elements of an RD&D system that will be capable of conducting the work addressed by the Program Committee, and of performing in a high quality way to address problems for which research can be useful.

* In June 1998, the Board and OERI sponsored a two-day meeting on the coordination of education research agenda planning. The purpose of the meeting was twofold: to bring together leaders and representatives from a dozen or more research planning efforts under way in federal agencies and professional organizations; and to connect those planning efforts with each other and with educators and policymakers who could both use education research results and who have responsibilities to develop future plans. The conference identified several opportunities for collaborative work, including strengthening capacity to identify priorities; establishing standards for research;

synthesizing findings; strengthening the education research system; building connections across research, policy, practice, and the public; and shaping research planning responsibilities appropriate to principal agencies and institutions.

By early 1999, the Board will have significant new work for public release and for integration with the efforts of the Program Committee.

Prospects

NERPPB was created by Congress to play an important role in education research. Its role is to approve priorities and standards, provide links across research and education with the public and policymakers, and provide a non-partisan voice for education research. The current membership has been serving for 3 1/2 years, a record of unusual longevity in the federal government for such a group. It has performed on demand and intensively as it quickly developed an operating style and undertook the approval of standards and collaboration/approval of research priorities plans that occupied its entire attention for more than 18 months. As Congress specified, the Board represents researchers, practicing educators, and other influential participants in the production and use of education research; it has found ways to assure that different voices are heard.

The Board has "done its homework," following key decisions early in 1997. It has organized itself around its continuing and most influential responsibilities. It has demonstrated its commitment to bring researchers, educators, and policymakers together through its workshops and commissioned work. The Board was intended to be a constructive contributor in its association with the Assistant Secretary, not just a passive reactor.

The sum of the Board's output to date includes:

* a synthesis report on program priorities;
* a report on critical transitions;
* a report on teacher professional development;
* a report on R&D capacity;

- a report on implementation of peer review standards;
- a brochure on three sets of education research quality standards;
- a report on the research, development, and communication system;
- a history of federal education research and OERI;
- a map of the current RD&D system;
- an analysis of the fit of the education RD&D system with the infrastructure requirements for research needs;
- a comparison of RD&D systems in education with those of other agencies;
- an analysis of the Department's role in education knowledge building and information gathering; and
- a report of the conference on education research planning across agencies.

In accordance with the Board's request, the Executive Director will continue to make visits to congressional offices to represent the Board. The productivity of those visits should be enhanced now that results from the Board's own work can be shared.

What comes next for the Board can be shaped by interest and response to these products from the Office of the Assistant Secretary, the education community, Congress, and the general public. There could be many options for next steps by the Board along two dimensions: one from lesser to greater levels of endorsement of these reports; and the other dimension from lesser to greater collaboration with the Assistant Secretary, ranging from simple dissemination of the reports to intensive outreach efforts, influences, and focus groups. These efforts will be an essential part of the Board's responsibility for assimilating and synthesizing the variety of alternatives presented in the reports as it prepares to submit its recommendations for the reauthorization of OERI to the Secretary of Education and Congress.

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26